IX.—ROMANCE ETYMOLOGIES.

I.

French *fléchir* < Old French *fleschir* < *fleschier,* " to bend,"
< *flexicāre* < *flexus* < *flectere,* " to bend."

French *fléchir,* O. F. *fleschir, fleskir* has been derived by
Förster, *Zeitschrift f. rom. Phil.,* III, p. 262, from a Latin
fleskire < *flescus* < *flexus.* The assumption of the shift of
ks to *sk* is defended by an appeal to *alaskir* from *laxus,* seem-
ingly showing the same metathesis. This phonetic step,
which must be assigned to a Latin period, is in both instances
certainly unjustifiable, although it has been admitted by
excellent authorities. In the *Dictionnaire général* we find
French *lâcher* derived from a type *lascare* < *laxare.* Here
the assumption of metathesis seems to go back to Diez,
Etymologisches Wb., pp. 188 f., who cites as analoga Cam-
panian *fisquer* for *fixer* and *lusque* for *luxe;* but these forms
clearly represent popular deformations of learned words and
are accordingly irrelevant. French *lâcher* has also been
derived by Gröber, who evidently objects to the dubious
metathesis, from Old High German *lasc,* a type assumed to
account for Middle High German *lasch,* " schlaff," and Old
Norse *loskr,* " schlaff," " lass." Kluge, however (*Etymolo-
gisches Wb.,* 6th ed.), is inclined to derive the Germanic
from the Romance group. Gröber's derivation has also been
disputed on phonological grounds by Mackel ; cf. Körting,
s. v. *lask,* who rejects the Germanic etymon. The correct
etymon for *lâcher,* namely *laxicare,* was first suggested by
Ulrich, *Zeitschrift f. rom. Phil.,* IX, p. 429 ; is rejected
by Körting, who says that the assumption of the type is
unnecessary and seems to consider the derivation of the

French word unsettled; but is accepted by Meyer-Lübke, *Rom. Gramm.*, II, p. 608. It will be seen later that **laxicare* presents a perfect phonetic type for the derivation of the French form. The cognate Romance forms (Provençal *lascar*, etc.) present no difficulty. Returning to *fléchir*, we need only mention the derivation of the word from *flectere*, adopted by Diez, which is phonetically impossible. Paris, *Rom.*, VIII, p. 628, has explained *fléchir* as derived from the adjective *flesche*, "bent," and the latter as a postverbal from *fleschier*, which he derives from **flescare* for *flexare*. My objections to this etymology are as follows. In the first place, the existence of the adjective *flesche* is extremely doubtful. Scheler and Paris (*l. c.*) thought it occurred in one Old French passage, namely, in the *Saint Eloi*, 92 b: *Genous fleches, enclin le chief.* Here Förster, however (article cited), reads *flechés*, and the passage is also quoted in this form by Godefroy. No evidence for the existence of the word has appeared in Godefroy's *Complément*, and under the circumstances it should doubtless be regarded as imaginary. In the second place, the phonetic step from *flexare* to **flescare* is without support. Finally Gröber, *Archiv f. lat. Lex. u. Gr.*, II, p. 285, explains *fléchir* as a collateral form of *flechier* showing a change of conjugation. This explanation certainly seems to be the correct one. A glance at the lexicon is sufficient to convince one that verbs fluctuating between the *-ir* and *-(i)er* conjugations were fairly common in Old French: note, e. g., *refroidier, refroidir; embalsemer, embalsamir; engrossier, engrossir; amplier, amplir; empoenter, empoentir; empreignier, empreignir.* The list could undoubtedly be greatly lengthened.

Now, to explain this earlier form *flechier*, Gröber (article cited) sets up a type **flecticare*, which is accepted by Körting, but which does not account for the Old French form *fleschier*. Paris and Förster (articles cited) assume that the regular

Old French form of both *flechier* and *flechir* had an *s*, and, in view of the spellings with *s* cited by Förster, this opinion certainly seems to be correct. Several forms with *s* will also be seen in Godefroy.

The right etymon is **flexicare*. This type was first suggested by Gröber (article cited), who rejected it on the ground that it should have given O. F. **fleischier*. For a similar reason the *Dictionnaire général* rejects **taxitare* as the etymon of O. F. *taster*, Modern French *tâter*, alleging that this Latin type would have given O. F. **taister*. But both authorities are in error regarding the sound-law here in question, which is stated by Schwan-Behrens, *Altfranz. Gramm.*, 4th ed., § 158, 2, as follows :—

"Völlige Assimilation des Palatals an den folgenden Konsonanten trat . . . . in vortoniger Stellung in der Verbindung ks + Kons. ein : Beispiele : . . . . *sextariu* > *sestier*, *dextrariu* > *destrier*, **tax(i)tare* > *taster*, *entox(i)care* > *entoschier*, *extendere* > *estendre*, *extorquere* > *estordre*, satzunbetonte *extra* > *estre* und *joxta* > *juste.*"

To these examples we may now add **flexicare* > *fleschier*, which is perfectly analogous to *intoxicare* > *entoschier*, **laxicare* > *laschier*, and **taxicare* > *taschier*. *Tâcher*, the modern form of *taschier*, is derived by the *Dictionnaire général* from **tascare*, a metathesized form of *taxare*. But, as has been shown above, the *analoga* seemingly justifying the assumption of a metathesis of the group *ks* in a Latin period are of no value. The etymon **taxicare* is due to Ulrich, *Zeitschrift f. rom. Phil.*, IX, p. 429. It is put in brackets by Körting, but is accepted by Meyer-Lübke, *Rom. Gramm.*, II, p. 608.[1] The fact that a so-called epenthetic *i* does not appear in developments like that of **taxitare* > *taster* is to be explained

[1] The daring etymology *tâche* < **tasca* < **τάσχις* < *τάξις*, recently suggested by T. Claussen, *Romanische Forschungen*, XV (1904), p. 847, scarcely deserves mention. The *Dictionnaire général* correctly states that *tâche* is a postverbal from *tâcher*.

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by the chronology of the sound-change. It is well known that the pretonic vowel in paroxytones and the posttonic vowel in proparoxytones dropped at different dates. Thus *taxitare*, as is evidently assumed by Schwan-Behrens, *l. c.* had been reduced to *tastare* in a period when *taxitat* was still trissyllabic. One might of course also expect a form of the verb with epenthetic *i*, preserved from the proparoxytone forms, to survive, and this actually did happen in some cases. We need only cite the postverbal *test* beside *tast*, presupposing a form *taister* beside *taster*, and the still more striking form *entoischier* beside *entoschier* < *intoxicare*.

If this reasoning is correct, we have established a conclusion diametrically opposed to that of the *Dictionnaire général*, s. v. *fléchir*, which says with regard to the etymology of the word : " Origine inconnue. La forme du mot ne permet pas d'y voir un représentant, direct on indirect, du latin *flectere*, qui a cependant le même sens."

II.

Spanish *rosca*, "screw" < *rōsicāre* < *rōsus* < *rōdere*, "to gnaw."

In Monlau's *Diccionario etimológico* we find the following note : " Rosca : ' Es del vascuence *errosca*, y se dijo de *erruzca*, á fuerza, por la grande que tiene para mover grandes pesos.' (Larramendi.) Según Covarrubias viene del latín *ruere*, lanzarse, arrojarse, porque gira sobre sí misma. Diez afirma, con más acierto, que el orígen de *rosca* es todavía desconocido." The word is missing in Körting's index. On consulting the recent edition of the dictionary of the Spanish Academy, we are told that *rosca* is derived from an absurd Greek etymon.

I derive the word from *rosicare*, " to gnaw," the existence of which in late Latin is rendered certain by Italian

rosicare, Provençal *rosegar*, "to gnaw." The etymology presents no phonetic irregularity. For the *c*, cf. *rascar*, "to scratch " < **rasicare*, "to scratch." There is no reason for doubting that intervocalic *c* in this position, in Spanish as in Provençal and French, may either remain a surd or become a sonant, according to the date at which the preceding vowel dropped. The formation of *rosca*, " a gnawing instrument " as a postverbal from **rosicare*, "to gnaw," has countless parallels, for which I refer to Meyer-Lübke, *Rom. Gramm.*, II, pp. 444 ff. I need only mention Italian *leva*, "lever," from *levare*, " to raise." For the sense-development we may compare English *bit*, *i. e.*, apparently "a biting instrument," and Italian *succhiare*, " to bore," generally derived from **suculare*, "to suck." **Rosicare* may have a direct descendant in the Spanish technical word *roscar*, "to furrow," which, however, may also be a recent derivative from *rosca*.

III.

Spanish *sesgo*, " oblique " < *sesgar*, " to cut obliquely " < **sēsecāre*, "to cut apart."

To explain Spanish *sesgo*, " oblique," Baist, *Zeitschrift f. rom. Phil.*, VII, p. 122, sets up a type **sēsecus*, which he attempts to support by the analogy of *circumsecus, extrinsecus*. The formation of **sēsecus* is not made sufficiently probable, and the etymon is rightly rejected by Körting, who favors the derivation from **subsecare*. The latter type, however, presents insuperable phonetic difficulty, to say nothing of semantic obscurity. Ulrich, *Zeitschrift für rom. Phil.*, IV, p. 383, derived *sesgar* from **sexicare* < **sexus* < *sectus*, but Körting objects to the etymology on the ground that **sexus* for *sectus* is a monstrosity. **Sexicare* also presents phonetic and semantic difficulty.

The right etymon is **sēsecāre*, "to cut apart," an unim-

peachable formation presenting no phonetic irregularity. This type was also thought of by Baist (article cited), who dismissed it on account of the existence of the adjective *sesgo*. But the derivation of *sesgo* as a postverbal from *sesgar* presents no difficulty. On the formation of post-verbal adjectives I refer to Meyer-Lübke, *Rom. Gramm.*, II, p. 448, and to the *Dictionnaire général*, I, § 53. The sense-development also presents no difficulty: 1) "to cut apart," "to cut across;" 2) "cut across," "oblique."

IV.

French *ruche*, "hive" (beside *rouche*, "hull of a ship on the stocks") < O. F. *rusche*, Prov. *rusca*, Piedmontese and Lombard *rusca*, "bark," < Comascan *ruscá*, "to scale off," < *rŭspicare* < *ruspare*, "to scratch."

In the *Dictionnaire général* we are told that *ruche* is of Celtic origin. Körting's article on the word reads as follows :—

"*Rūsca* ist das vorauszusetzende, aber bezüglich seines Ursprunges ganz dunkle Grundwort zu prov. *rusca*, Baumrinde (auch piemont. und lomb. *rusca*) ; altfrz. *rusche* (norm. *ruque*), neufrz. *ruche* (aus Baumrinde gefertigter Bienenkorb, Schiffsrumpf). Diez 673 hielt das Wort für keltisch, Thurneysen, p. 111, verneint dies."

To make it clear that the words for "hive" and "bark" are identical, Diez, *l. c.*, cites Spanish *corcho*, meaning both "bark of the cork-tree" and "bee-hive." I propose to derive the group from the verbal type **ruspicare*, which seems to explain perfectly all the forms. For the dropping of the middle vowel in Provençal and French we may compare Latin *hospitale* > Prov. *ostal*, O. F. *ostel*. In Tuscan, *hospitale* becomes *ospedale*, retaining the pretonic vowel. But Meyer-Lübke, *Italienische Grammatik*, p. 71, notes that the Italian dialects diverge widely from Florentine in their

treatment of syncope, and in view of the vagueness of our present knowledge of the whole question I hold that, unless the contrary assumption can be supported by evidence, we should admit the regularity of the development of *ruspicare into an early Italian *ruscare, surviving in Comascan as ruscá, whence as postverbals Piedmontese and Lombard rusca. We may perhaps cite Tuscan tastare < *taxitare, destare < *de-excitare as showing a development parallel to that assumed, though, to be sure, the consonant-groups in question are quite different. This verb *ruspicare is derived readily enough, by the elimination of the common suffix -icare, from *ruspare, the existence of which in Latin with the original meaning of " to scratch " is generally admitted by Romance scholars, e. g., by Diez, Körting, and Schuchardt (Romanische Etymologieen, I, p. 27) on account of the existence of Latin ruspari, " to examine," and Italian ruspare, " to scratch." The semantic series,—1) " to scratch off," " to peel," 2) " peel," " bark," 3) " hive made of bark," 4) " hive,"—seems perfectly legitimate, particularly in view of the fact that the first stage is supported by Comascan ruscá, " to scale off."

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